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Department of
Agriculture

PREPARED BY
Food Safety
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Service

Extension
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Today's farm animals often are exposed to drugs and other chemical compounds from a variety of sources—medications, pesticides, equipment, or even building materials. Many of the compounds are important to modern meat and poultry production, but carelessness or misuse can result in serious problems. Residues of drugs or chemicals remaining in meat or poultry at the time of slaughter can mean condemnation of the product at the slaughter plant, and that means financial losses. Residue problems can lower consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of the meat and poultry supply, leading to a decline in farm income.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is cooperating with producer organizations to help farmers and others involved in animal production reduce the potential for these problems. The Residue Avoidance Program shows producers how to identify points in their production systems where animals might become contaminated. Planning and carrying out preventive steps at those points will make residue violations unlikely and increase marketability of meat and poultry.



Checkpoints in the farm production system

Buildings: design buildings that are easy to clean and made with materials that won't cause contamination.

- Building materials—even bedding and litter—should be safe and free of contaminants. Know the source of the materials, especially if they are recycled. If you notice odors or other signs of chemical treatment (such as wood preservatives) on anything animals come in contact with, check with the supplier or have materials tested before use.
- Equipment—outdated equipment and fluorescent fixtures may contain toxic substances such as PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls).
- Paints, pesticides, cleaning compounds—follow instructions on the label, or ask your Extension agent if precautions are needed for farm use.

Water: check water supply and equipment.

- Know the water source. Avoid runoff water from lagoons or other contaminated areas.
- If medication is added to the water supply and then stopped, clean the system to remove any remaining traces; or use a separate system for nonmedicated water.

Feed: check feed, storage areas, and troughs.

- Keep records of the date, supplier, and code numbers for all feed ingredients or for premixed feed. Keep samples of feed and ingredients—especially those with sulfas—for at least 90 days after marketing animals.
- Separate medicated and nonmedicated feed. Clearly mark bins for each type; clean and flush bins and mixing equipment before switching from medicated to nonmedicated feed.

Accidental Contamination: to avoid mistaking one drug or chemical for another, read labels and don't reuse containers.



Drugs and Medicated Feed: use medications only when necessary—not as a substitute for sound management.

- Do not overdose; follow instructions carefully.
- Keep records, noting which animals were treated, drugs given, and the specified withdrawal period needed between treatment and slaughter.
- Do not slaughter animals before the required withdrawal period ends.

Disease Prevention: take the necessary precautions to avoid illnesses which require treatment with drugs.

- Sanitation throughout production is essential.
- Good nutrition (including antibody-containing colostrum for young animals) builds resistance.
- Proper control of ventilation, temperature, dust, and drafts helps prevent disease.
- Isolate sick animals to avoid spreading disease.

Residue Detection: test animals for residues before marketing.

- Before marketing animals treated with antibiotics, you can test them for residues, using the guidebook for farmers listed below.*

For single free copies of these publications, write:

FSIS Information, Room 1163-S
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

*How to Perform the Live Animal Swab Test for Antibiotic Residues, Agriculture Handbook Number 601

FSIS Facts: National Residue Program, FSIS-18





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